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THE
TRUTH,
AND
EXCELLENCY
OF THE *N^o 90*
Gospel Dispensation

Briefly Considered, in the
INTERPRETATION
OF

2 Pet. i. 19. *We have also a more sure
Word of Prophecy.*

Paraphrastically deduced from the
Nature of the Gospel, and Christ's own
Words: And consonant to the *Liturgy*
of the Church of *England*.

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TO THE
READER.

HAVING observ'd, that some Eminent Men of the Clergy of the *Church of England*, in their Answers to a late Book called, *The Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, have given their Opinions upon 2 *Pet.* i. 19. But both they, and the Author of that Book, seem to me in their several Interpretations of it, neither agreeable to the Truth, nor to the general Scope and Tendency of the Writings of that *Apostle*: Having therefore seriously considered the said Text, and compar'd it with the rest of its *Author's* Sentiments, as well as those of other *Apostles*; I found my self concern'd, to publish what Observations have occur'd to my Thoughts thereupon: In doing which,

as I design not to offend any, so do I not intend to enter the Lists of Debate and Controversy about them; but simply, with a View to the Good of others, have proposed, what to me appears right; and endeavoured to shew how agreeable my Sentiments are to the Testimonies of holy Scripture; and that they are justifiable, even by the *Liturgy* of the *Church of England* it self.

If what I have written, may be serviceable for the opening the Understandings of any in the Mysteries and Doctrine of Christianity, or to the prompting of any to a serious Application to the Duties of that pure and holy Religion, (which undoubtedly, was the End of *St. Peter* in writing his Epistles) I shall think my self abundantly rewarded.

THE

THE *most ready*
Truth and Excellency
 OF THE
Gospel Dispensation,

Considered, in the Interpretation of
*2 Pet. i. 19. We have also a more
 sure Word of Prophecy, &c.*

THE better to understand this Text,
 which has proved so difficult a Task,
 as well to some Eminent among the
 Clergy themselves, as to some busy Writers,
 (too many of whom *darken Counsel by Words
 without Knowledge; or, as our Apostle says,
 wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction*) let
 us make a few Remarks on the Difference be-
 tween the Dispensation of the Law and Pro-
 phets, and that of the Gospel.

The first, tho' a Ministration of Condem-
 nation, had such a Degree of Glory attending
 it, that the People could not stedfastly be-
 hold the Face of its Mediator, *Moses*, who
 was but a Servant; but the latter had a far
 greater Degree of Glory, made manifest in
 the Face of its Introducer, *Jesus Christ*, the

Son. The first, I say, *made nothing perfect*; but the Gospel, *the bringing in of a better Hope, did, by the which we draw nigh unto God.* Heb. VII. 19.

In the former, the Priests Lips were to preserve the People's Knowledge of the numerous Precepts of the Law, and now and then, God raised up a Prophet, to reprove both Priests and People, for their repeated Idolatries and Backslidings, and to foretel and point out the more excellent Dispensation of the Gospel, in which, he would pour out of the same Spirit, that then appeared in the Prophets, upon all Flesh: And that by it, he would teach the People himself, and in Righteousness establish them, (which the Law was not able to do) that the Priesthood should no longer be confined to any one Tribe, but that they should all be capable, both Sons and Daughters, Servants and Handmaids, to prophecy and shew forth his Praise.

This under the Law fell, in that Degree, but on very few, being only scattered here and there, like a few Drops of Rain; but under the Gospel it was to be poured down like an universal Shower upon all.

That this was prophesied should be, and really is, the Difference between the Dispensations, no Body, that I know of, believing the Scriptures, will deny.

Accordingly,

Accordingly, when the promised Saviour himself came, from the Bosom of his Father, in a Body prepared of God, to do his Will in, he illustrates this Difference in its most essential Part, and shews that the Gospel laid the Ax to the Root of Evil, *viz.* its Conception in the Heart; whereas, the Law contented it self, with the Cognizance of the Branches only, *viz.* when it was brought forth into Action. Therefore, such as the Work and Business of the Gospel was to be, such must be its Ministration; as the Work was to be inward in the Heart, so must its Ministration be there also, to meet and conquer Sin and Evil, before it break forth into Action.

And we find that Christ was most solicitous to inform his Disciples, wherein their greatest Happiness consisted under the Gospel; that it was not in his Reigning as a Temporal Prince among them, as they vainly thought, but in his obtaining for them the Gift of the holy Ghost, according to what had been promised and prophesied, which alone was able to endue them, with those Qualifications and Excellencies necessary to, and promised under, the Gospel; concerning which they were, as well as others, very ignorant, and weak in the Faith of; their Eyes being after an outward Kingdom for the Messiah, in which Notion they continued to the very Time of his Ascension, notwithstanding

standing all he had said to the contrary, as far as they in that weak State could bear.

So that from their being thus attached to this Notion, they could by no means reconcile his being the promised Messiah, with his soon dying and leaving of them; and when ever that was hinted to them, it filled them with Sorrow, being contrary to their Notion of the Messiah's reigning among them, subduing all their Enemies and restoring the Kingdom to them; which the *Romans* then possessed, and to whom they were Tributary.

But when the Time of his Departure drew nigh, Christ reasoned with them a little plainer than he had done, by telling them, that if he did not go away, the very End of his Coming would not be answered, nor the Promise of God made by the Prophets fulfilled, of sending the holy Ghost to be their Monitor and Comforter, but that he must go to his Father in Heaven, from whence he came, and there would intercede with him, to send them the Gift of the holy Spirit, which would give them the Knowledge of him, and Power of the Gospel, far beyond what they then knew or could think; and that this should remain with them always.

That this would bring to their Remembrance, and explain to them what he had said
to

to them in a more mystical Sense, and should take farther of his Mind, and should give it to them.

And that this holy Gift, the Power of the Gospel Dispensation, should lead them into all Truth, and teach them all Things necessary for their own and others Salvation, yea, that as it was the same Spirit and Word of Prophecie, that was in the Prophets, *It should likewise shew them Things that were to come.* John XVI. 13.

Now it appears to me very plain, that Christ chose these ignorant and illiterate Companions, that the Power and Virtue of the Gospel might appear the more in its own Lustre, when it should make them wise and able Ministers of it; and endue them with Strength and Boldness to preach the same incessantly, in the midst of the Hazard of their Lives and Liberty, which most of them parted with for its Sake.

Christ's great Care therefore was, to keep them together a few Days after he was ascended, that they might not faint in their Minds, and separate, as they were about to do after his Death; and commands them to go to Jerusalem, and wait for the Promise of the Father; accordingly they obey'd, and on the tenth Day after, being met with one Accord on the Day of Pentecost, or 50th from his Resurrecti-

on, they were most wonderfully filled with the *holy Ghost*, to the very great Amazement of all that heard and saw them, for they began to speak in other Languages than their own, insomuch, that People of the many different Nations then living in *Jerusalem*, heard these poor illiterate Fishermen speak the wonderful Things of God in their own Mother-Tongues, which naturally made them desirous to know what it meant, and how it came to pass.

Our Apostle was the first that opened to them the Mystery of this great Event, as may be read at large, *Acts II.* where we find what a great Change this Gift of the holy Spirit had made on him; who but a little before had denied his Master, and was so very ignorant of the Things he said to him, as well as he was of what the Prophets had writ concerning him: Neither these, nor even what himself had seen in the holy Mount, had made much Impression on him, nor given him but a very slender Notion of Things, in comparison to what this holy Gift had instantaneously done: For he could now, not only expound the Scriptures, and all that the Prophets had writ concerning Christ, but do mighty Miracles, and preach the Gospel on all Occasions. Part of what he did by Word and Doctrine, to the Conversion of many to the Faith, may be read in the *Acts of the Apostles*. And now let us follow

follow our Apostle to his Epistles, which we find are addressed to the Believers in Christ, to those who had *obtained the like precious Faith with the Apostles*, and were established in the Truth; and consequently the Scope and Tendency of those Epistles, was more to press a Perseverance in the Faith, and in the Practice of those Christian Virtues and Duties therein recommended, than to convert to it: Assuring them, that if they continued in it, they should *never fall, viz.* they should not be misled nor turned aside, by the false Teachers and Persecutors, whom he foresaw would come; but should receive *the End of their Faith, viz. The Salvation of their Souls.*

And as he had done what was necessary for them hitherto by Word and Doctrine, and now foresaw his near approaching Death, he was willing to commit these Things to Writing, that they might the better remember them when he was dead; which might be of great Service to them when those gross Heresies should be broached among them, by some that would even deny that Jesus Christ was the Messiah prophesied of.

And, like a wise Master builder, he lays the true Foundation of the *Hope* they were begotten again unto, for it was lost in Adam,

viz. a blessed Immortality, by the certain and visible Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, and his Ascension into Heaven; asserting that he would administer an Entrance thereinto, and give an Inheritance for ever therein, to all those that were kept by the mighty Power of God, through this Faith unto Salvation; and that were born of incorruptible Seed, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.

As if he had said, It was by this Word *that the World was made*, and 'tis by this Word of Prophecy, *that, I foresee, 'tis reserved unto Fire, against the Day of Judgment and Perdition of ungodly Men.*

It was this Word and holy Spirit that was in the Prophets, by which, they so long ago foresaw, and so often foretold the Coming and Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow; and 'tis by the same, that we, the Apostles, have been made Partakers of the Power and Mystery of the Gospel. We are not ashamed to own, that all our personal Knowledge of Christ, that all we had heard and saw, even the heavenly Vision in the holy Mount, did not give us the Knowledge and Power of the Gospel, in any Degree comparable with what we received by this holy Spirit at *Jerusalem*, after Christ's Ascension,

We

We have faithfully reported to you the many mighty Works he did, such as no other could do; these bore Testimony that he was the Messiah prophesied of: and, I say, some few of us heard him acknowledged such *from the Excellent Glory*, and saw him clothed with it.

We saw the ill Treatment he met with, and his Crucifixion, and were Eye-witnesses of that great *Characteristick* of the *Messiah*, his Resurrection from the Dead, which proved him to be that *holy One*, whom God, according to the Prophet *David*, would *not suffer to see Corruption*.

We conversed with him after it many Days, we eat and drank with him, yea, one of us that could scarce believe it was he, was fully convinced and confirmed in it, by feeling the very Prints, which the Nails that fastned him to the Cross had made in his Hands and Feet. We saw him likewise ascend into Heaven.

But such is the Excellency of your Faith, that ye believe and love him *whom* you have *not seen* after this Manner, which makes you *rejoyce with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*. The Tryal of which Faith, is much more precious than of Gold that perisbeth, tho' it be tryed, and purified with Fire; and will be found (if you

continue in it) unto Praise, Honour and Glory, at the Appearing of Jesus Christ at the last Day.

But above all, my Brethren, that which confirms every Thing that Christ said to us, and that the Prophets have said of him, and proves him, to you as well as us, to be the Son of God beyond all Dispute, is his obtaining for us and sending to us *the Gift of the holy Ghost*, according to his Promise, by which we may all know, if we mind the Operation of it, that the Son of God is come, and that he has given us the Understanding of it. By which holy Spirit, which God hath sent into every one of our Hearts, we know him that is true, and are in him that is true, even in his Son *Jesus Christ*, this is the true God and eternal Life. Thus he that believeth, hath the Witness in himself.

And now Brethren, I need not tell you that *all Flesh is as Grass*, and subject to wither like the *Flower* of it, for 'tis evident by the Prophets being dead, who saw these Things at a Distance, and that we must die, who have seen them come to pass, and which we have faithfully reported unto you, assuring you over again, they are not idle or invented Stories, but real Facts and Truth: So that you have not only the concurring Testimony of the Prophets and Apostles for your Support, against

against those *Seducers* that will come among you, but you have also this *more sure* Witness, the *Word of Prophecie* it self, the Spirit of Christ, which he has thus sent into every one of our *dark Hearts*, which if taken Heed to, will by its *Light* lead and conduct us to Christ, as the *Star* did the *wise Men* at his Birth. This, I say, will be of more Efficacy to preserve you in a Time of Tryal, than the bare Records or Reports of others, tho never so true.

Our *Beloved Brother Paul* has plainly intimated, that the *Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ*, is manifested and made known to us after this Manner, *viz.* He who made the World, and did at the Creation of it, command *Light* to shine out of the dark Chaos, has thus, shined into our Hearts, to give us this Knowledge of his Son.

It is to the Power and Excellency of this Word, the Apostle *Paul* bears such ample Testimony, and by which, indeed, he was called to the *Apostleship*, who did not receive it of Man, nor was taught it by Man, but by the Revelation of *Jesus Christ*.

This made him who had been a *Persecutor*, an able *Minister of the Gospel*; in which Function, he fell not short of any of the Apostles that

that had the personal Knowledge and Conversion of Christ. This great Apostle of the *Gentiles* asserts the Extension of it to them, as well as its Ability, By saying, *the Grace of God, which brings Salvation* to all them that obey it, *has appeared to all Men*, as a Teacher of their Duty to themselves, their Neighbour, and to God.

And when he likewise tells the Believers of the coming of the *Seducers* among them, He recommends them to God and this preserving *Word of his Grace*, which was able to *build them up* in their *most holy Faith*, on the Foundation on which they then stood; *viz.* of the *Prophets* and *Apostles*, Christ Jesus himself being the chief Corner-Stone, and to give all them that were *sanctified* by it, the promised *Inheritance* in Heaven. The chief Aim of the Apostles in writing to the Saints and Believers, who were established in the Faith (that Jesus Christ, who was crucified without the Gates at *Jerusalem*, was the promised Messiah, and that God had not only raised him from the Dead, and taken him up into the same Glory he had with him before the Worlds began, but had through his Mediation and Intercession, sent the Gift of the *Holy Ghost* to Men, for their Aid and Comfort, according to God's and Christ's Promise) their chief Aim, I say, was to confirm them in that blessed Faith, and that they might be preserved

preserved in it to the End, and not be led away from it by those *false Teachers* and *Antichrists*, they foresaw would come among them, and deny this, than which, nothing can be more fully and particularly expressed by our Apostle, in the Close of this his Second Epistle, viz. *Ye therefore, Beloved, who know these Things before, beware lest ye also, being led away by the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own Steadfastness, which you are now established in, but grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be Glory, now, and for ever, Amen.*

That the Knowledge, Strength, and Safety of Christians, consist in knowing and obeying the Dictates of the Holy Spirit, is acknowledged in the fullest Manner, in the *Liturgy* of the *Church of England*; and as this is constantly read in her Assemblies, one would wonder, that any of her Sons should fail to give it the Preference to all the Records and Reports of the most Sacred Truths made and given by others; since 'tis that which their own *Liturgy* acknowledges, doth enable Christians to persevere in the *Faith*, and to live a Life becoming the Gospel; and those that do so, will not only firmly believe the sacred Records, but will also receive great Comfort and Benefit thereby. A very few of many Instances that might be mentioned

out of the said Liturgy, may suffice to prove what I have said of it.

And first, in the Collect for *Whitsunday*, in Commemoration of the Reception of this most holy Gift I am pleading for, it is said, God, who at this Time, didst teach the Hearts of thy faithful People, (how did God teach them?) by the sending to them the Light of thy holy Spirit, Grant us, by the same Spirit, to have a right Judgment in all Things, and evermore to rejoyce in his holy Comfort. Also, in the Litany, That it may please thee, to give us true Repentance, to forgive us all our Sins, and to endue us with the Grace of thy Holy Spirit, to amend our Lives. And in the Absolution pronounced by the Priest, 'tis said, Wherefore, let us beseech him to grant us true Repentance, and his holy Spirit, that those Things may please him, which we do at this present, and that the rest of our Life hereafter may be pure and holy. Also in the Collect for the 19th Sunday after Trinity, 'tis said, O God! for as much as without thee, we are not able to please thee, grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all Things direct and rule our Hearts. Again in another Collect. And because through the Weakness of our mortal Nature, we can do no good Thing without thee, Grant us the Help of thy Grace, that in keeping thy Commandments, we may please thee both in Will and Deed. Nay, so essential is the divine Aid owned in the Office of Ordination, that the

the Bishop asketh the Person to be made a Deacon, *Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon you this Office and Ministration, &c.* And he answers I trust so.

Let us therefore follow our Apostle's Advice in his first *Epistle*, and we shall not be ignorant of the Tendency of his Second. *As every Man, says he, has received this Gift, even so minister the same one to another, and if any Man speak, (or write) of the Things of God, let him do it as the Oracles of God. If any Man minister, let him do it as of the Ability that God giveth; that God in all Things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be Praise and Dominion for Ever and Ever, Amen.*

Our *Apostle* therefore farther informs the Believers, in this second *Epistle*, that the Things which were said and written by the *Prophets*, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, were not of any private or particular Interpretation, (as some now labour to make them) but that they were written on the Account of this great Dispensation of the Messiah, and not what was to be fulfilled in their Time who wrote them, but related to the Time of the Gospel, when the *Holy Ghost* should be sent down from Heaven, which was then come to pass; this very Thing, he says, had been so great a Mystery for many Ages, that the very *Angels* desired to pry, or look, into it.

And the Apostle Paul affirms, that this *Mystery* had been hid, or kept secret, since the World began, but was then, made known to all Nations, for the Obedience of Faith, viz. Christ by his Holy Spirit in them, the only Hope of that future Glory that was to follow; and he tells them, that to know whether they were in the Faith or no, they were to examine themselves; and if they found Christ thus to be in them, then were they in the true Faith, and what compleated them was, to know themselves in him: This was and is alone to be known by being new Creatures; and our being new Creatures is known only by a new Conversation; as our Apostle expresses it, viz. *As he that has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all Manner of Conversation*, being redeemed from a vain one. The same Thing is expressed by St. Paul in other Words, thus, viz. *If you have heard Christ, and have been taught by him (tho' he was then in Heaven) that ye put off the former Conversation which was corrupt, according to the deceitful Lusts, and that ye put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*, that you might be reconciled unto Christ, in Order to his presenting you *Holy and Unblameable and unreproueable* unto God; and which, he said, Christ had promised to do, if they continued grounded and settled in the Faith, and were not moved away by false Teachers and Persecutions, from this Hope of the Gospel, which he had so fully

fully preached unto them; and admonishes them, *as they had received Jesus Christ after this Manner, they should thus walk in him, rooted and built up in him, being firmly established in the Faith; taking Care lest any should Spoil them through vain Philosophy and Deceit, after the Traditions of Men, and Rudiments of the World, and not after Christ; who was the first Fruits from the Dead, and in whose Resurrection consisted the lively Hope, they were begotten again unto, of a blessed Immortality; for if Christ was not risen, in vain, he tells them, would have been any such Hope. And as a more sure Proof to them (than even their Report of it who saw it) he refers to a Measure of the same Spirit that raised Him from the Dead, being so to be known in themselves, as to quicken their mortal Bodies, and enable them to serve God acceptably in Newness of Life.*

These, one would think, were Grounds and Reasons of the *Christian Religion* worthy to be inculcated, and added to confirm, the Truth of the prophetic and distant Sight of it; for if the Records of that were lost, would that Loss make Void or lay waste the Gospel Dispensation? No: God in no Dispensation left himself without a Witness, much less in that of his Son: the *Holy Ghost*, by which the Prophets saw it at a distance, is also a Witness unto us, and the Law written in the Heart, which was promised un-

der this Dispensation, is more than a thousand Witnesses, that God is drawn near to Men by Jesus Christ, in order to qualifie them for a Reception into his Eternal Kingdom of Bliss and Glory. This convinces us of Sin when no Eye sees it committed, and gives Consolation in well-doing, when no body is privy to it,

And it might with Truth be now affirmed, if the Apostle *John* had never said it, or what he did say had been lost, that if we are condemned in our own Hearts, *God, who knoweth all Things, is greater*, and will also condemn us. But if we are clear from Condemnation in our own Hearts, *then have we Confidence towards God*; and he answers our Prayers, if *we keep his Commandments*. And *he that keepeth his Commandments dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him*; and 'tis this Gift of the Holy Spirit, by which Men know and witness God to abide in them, and which thus condemns or consoles according to the Thoughts and Actions of Men. This is not only a Witness, but a swift one against Evil, even so swift as often to extort from the Criminal, in the same Moment he commits it, a Confession of it with the Tongue, and usually with a Smite upon the Breast, as a farther Token where the Smart is felt for it.

'Tis therefore no Wonder or strange Thing, that there are now, as in the Apostles Days,
Men

Men who are unstable and unlearned in this School and Doctrine, who wrest the Scriptures to their own Fancies and Hypothesis, if not Destruction. Rendering the broad and extensive Foundation of *Christianity* narrow; and the sure Grounds and Reasons of it, even precarious. Thus, we see, the *Christian Religion* is not without other Grounds and Reasons, than those Historical and most true Traditional Ones from the *Prophets* and *Apostles*; the first truly saw it at a Distance, and the last were undoubted Witnesses of what they tell us they saw fulfilled in the Person of the Messiah; but what most effectually made him known, was the Heart-searching Power that was in him. It was this that discovered him to *Nathaniel*, and made him cry out with Astonishment, Thou art the Son of God! Thou art the King of *Israel*! by Christ's telling him, *under the Fig-Tree I saw thee*, the secret Cogitations of his Heart no doubt were opened to him. And the Woman of *Samaria* had the Notion, according to the Tradition of her Sect, that when the Messiah came he might be known from Pretenders, by this very sure Mark and Token, viz. *When He is come, He will tell us all Things*: And accordingly Christ having told her the Secrets of her Heart, she rightly drew the Conclusion, that that was He. And accordingly made Haste and published it in the City.

And

And now, I pray what should hinder Men's knowing and confessing to the same Power in our Time, and our being able to say now, (in our several Measures and Degres, for all are not Apostles &c. nor have Apostle's Work to do, nor have all five Talents given them, yet the faithful Improvers of the lesser Gifts are accepted; 'tis sufficient for a Man to have the Gift of Faith, if he obeys it, tho' he has not the Gift of Tongues or Miracles, &c.) as the Primitive *Christians* said then, *we know the Son of God is come*, by the Gift of the holy Spirit sent into our Hearts, which shews us all that we do and ever have done. This is He of a Truth, whom the *Prophets* and Primitive *Christians* bore *Testimony* to; by his Heart-searching Power we know Him; nor can we mistake Him, for another.

And as he thus knows the Secrets of all Hearts, and will judge them with righteous Judgment, in the Day God has appointed for it; the only Way for us to be happy here as well as hereafter, is to obey the Dictates of this *most Holy Gift*, and refrain from every Thing it reproves for, and we, as well as those in the *Apostle's* Time, shall feel the Peace of God which passeth all Understanding, to fill our Hearts and Minds, and enable us to give to Him, and the Lamb immaculate that sits upon the Throne with Him, Glory, Honour, Power, Worship

Worship, Dominion and Praise, now and for Evermore, Amen.

I must repeat what is most evident, that it was this Gift of the *Holy Ghost*, that gave the *Apostles* the Knowledge of the Mysteries of the Gospel, more than all they had before heard and seen; which cannot be better illustrated than in the Instance already given, of their thinking the Kingdom of the Messiah was to be on Earth, and to be that of *Israel* which they had lost, to the very last Day of their Conversation with Him, and it seems to be one of the last Questions they asked him, before his Ascension, whether he would then restore it to them. Another very remarkable Instance of their great Ignorance of, I say, the Mystery and Power of the Gospel, is, that when *Christ* spoke to them about his Resurrection, they wondered what that should mean. And even after his Death, they concluded there was an End of the whole Affair, and were for separating and going every one to his own again, notwithstanding what they had heard and seen. But after the Reception of this *Holy Gift*, it had the Effect *Christ* had before told them, this Ignorance was dissipated in an Instant, and all the *Mysteries* of the Gospel lay open to them, which they fully manifested by their *Ministry* and *Miracles*, as hath been already shewn.

D

This

This *Holy Gift* therefore, is the very Power of Godliness, which the *Apostle* foresaw some would deny, tho' they retained the Form of it. The great *Protestant Advocate* CHILLINGWORTH, hath admirably distinguished upon this Text, in a Sermon preached before the King, some of which take in his own Words and Sense, viz. " Some, *says he*, ascribe a Sort of Omnipotency to the World, the Flesh and the Devil. And that God neither doth nor will give sufficient Strength to resist them, (which Opinion he labours to explode, and positively affirms) " that by the Assistance of the Grace of God, it is in our Power to resist them; and shews the Necessity of so doing, from what we are so frequently and plainly assured in the New Testament, viz. That without Actual and Effectual Mortification, without actual and Essential Amendment of Life, Regeneration and Sanctification; no Hope, no Possibility of Salvation.

" Thus you see, *says he*, all the Divine Writers of the New Testament, with one Consent, and with one Mouth, proclaim the Necessity of real Holiness, and labour to disinchant us from the vain Fancy, that Men may be saved by sorrowing for their Sin, and intending to leave it, without effectual Conversion
" and

“ and Reformation of Life : Which, it may
 “ be feared, has sent Thousands of Souls
 “ to Hell, in a golden Dream of Heaven.

And therefore he very justly apprizes
 his Audience, “ That it was not the plea-
 “ sing themselves with being of such or
 “ such a Sect or Profession; together with
 “ going to Church, saying or hearing of
 “ Prayers; receiving of Sacraments; hear-
 “ ring, repeating, or preaching of Sermons;
 “ with Zeal for Ceremonies, or Zeal against
 “ them; or indeed with any Thing else,
 “ than constant Piety towards God, Jus-
 “ tice and Charity toward all our Neigh-
 “ bours; Temperance, Chastity and Sobri-
 “ ety towards our selves; we shall one
 “ Day find, we have not mocked God but
 “ our selves; and shall have our Portion
 “ among Hypocrites.

“ We make the Church, *says he*, a Stage
 “ whereon to act our Part, and play our
 “ Pageantry : There we make a Profession
 “ every Day of confessing our Sins, with
 “ humble, lowly and obedient Hearts, and
 “ yet when we have talked after this
 “ Manner 20, 30 or 40 Years, our Hearts,
 “ for the most Part, continue as Proud,
 “ as impenitent, and as disobedient, as they
 “ were in the Beginning.

“ We make great Protestations when we
 “ meet and assemble together, to render
 “ Thanks to God Almighty, for the great
 “ Benefits received at his Hand, and if
 “ this were to be performed with Words,
 “ with Hosannas and Hallelujahs, and Glo-
 “ ria Patra's, and Psalms, and Hymns, and
 “ such like outward Matters; peradven-
 “ ture we should do it very sufficiently :
 “ But in the mean Time, with our Lives
 “ and Actions we provoke the Almighty,
 “ and that to his Face, with all Varie-
 “ ty of grievous and bitter Provocati-
 “ ons. We do those Things which we
 “ know, and He has assured us, to be odi-
 “ ous unto Him, and contrary to His
 “ Nature.

And therefore he laments to see, that the
 Power of Godliness, almost in all Places,
 was decryed and vanished, the Form and
 Profession of it only remaining; That the
 Spirit, Soul and Life of Religion, was
 for the most Part gone, only the outward
 Carcass, or rather Shadow of it left be-
 hind.

His whole Discourse was to press the abso-
 lute Necessity of Conversion from Sin, and to
 shew, that nothing short of it, would stand a-
 ny one in stead. That none were Christ's;
 but those who have crucified the Flesh,
 with

with the Affections and Lusts of it, *Gal. V. 24.* " They that have not done so, *says he,* let them be as sorrowful as they please, they as yet are none of *Christ's*. " And, good Lord! *he crys out,* what a Multitude of *Christians* are there in the World, that do not belong to *Christ*? And goes on and says, " It is not then a *Wishing*, but a *Working Faith*; not a *wishing* you were a *New Creature*, or *sorrowing* you are not, but being a *new Creature*.

" Not a *wishing* you had kept, nor *sorrowing* you have not kept, nor *purposing* vainly to keep, but keeping his *Commandments*, must prevail with him.

" But is not this, *says he,* preaching *Works* as the *Papists* do? *He answers,* " No certainly; 'tis but to preach *Works* as *Christ* and his *Apostles* do; it is to preach the *Necessity* of them, which no good *Protestant*, no good *Christian* ever denied; but 'tis not to preach the *Merit* of them; which is the *Error* of the *Papists*.

For Men to preach or write of the Gospel and Godliness, and not direct to the Power of it, is to very little Edification, and no Wonder, if the People remain barren

of those Christian Virtues which are the Fruits of Godliness.

But if this Doctrine of the Sufficiency of the Grace of God, that is thus come by Jesus Christ; this Power, by which the primitive Christians did, and Men may now really live Godly, were universally, constantly and fervently preached and inculcated, as 'tis here, with the Danger of falling short of Obedience to it, I persuade my self, Men would not dally as they do with the great Concern of Salvation, nor live any longer under that Inchantment, already mentioned, which will continue to send poor Souls to Hell in a golden Dream of Heaven; who trust in such a sorrowing for, as only intending to leave their Sins, but live and dye in them: And then, where Christ is gone, they can never come, as he himself has affirmed,

To conclude, if the Enemies of Christianity could remove the great Bulwark of it, viz. *Divine Influences enlightning the Soul*, they might go a great Way toward drawing aside the Minds of Men. But blessed be God, this Rock on which Christ's Church is built; is too firmly founded to be removed or shaken by all the united Powers of Men and Devils.

To

To deny therefore this Influence, is to deny one of the Essential Benefits of Christ's Death and Mediation, for He, leading Captivity captive, (that is, the Power of Death, Hell and the Grave) ascended up on high, (and mediated) and obtained these divine Gifts for Men. And as the Grave could not hold captive the Body of this Holy One; so neither did the Heaven of Heavens contain or limit his spiritual Influence, by which, his Servants and Ministers received Power, Wisdom and Knowledge, as is shewed in the foregoing Pages.

Men may with as good a Grace, go about to deny the Influence of the Sun by its Light and Heat, as that of God upon Men: But poor, proud, finite Man, because he cannot comprehend the Mode and Manner of it, would as presumptuously, as injuriously to himself, deny it: Whereas, he cannot so much as understand or comprehend the Manner of the natural Sun's emitting its Rays of Light and Heat, tho' he daily sees and feels the Necessity and Benefit of them.

How much more Stupendiously Sublime and incomprehensible is the Diffusion of the holy Spirit. 'Tis sufficient for us poor Mortals, finite Creatures, to feel the Effect of it, as we do of the Sun, without comprehending the Manner of its Emanation.

However,

However 'tis very fit to be observed, that God does not act by a coercive or compulsive Power, but as he has given Men this spiritual Gift, so he has given them spiritual Faculties, and Power to use them, as well as their natural Ones. But if Men will not hear &c. the Consequence as naturally follows as in any other Case, God remaining invariably the same; and when he is said to condemn or justifie; harden or soften the Heart; it is without any Emotion in Him, but flows naturally and consequentially from the State of the Heart.

We have a lively and full Example of this in the Action of the Sun upon unctious Bodies, and upon Clay. The one it naturally softens and melts, and the other it hardens, without the least Alteration in its own Nature, that remaining the very same. Just so we may observe with Fire, to which if Stubble be applied, it consumes it, but if Gold or other permanent Matter, it leaves it unconsumed: The Fire all the while remaining just the same, as every Body knows: Now this Gift of the Spirit is called in Scripture, and compared to, Oyl and Unction; where this remains in us, and we remain in the Love of it, it naturally keeps the Heart tender and soft: But where 'tis turned from into Wantonness, hid in a Napkin, or buried in earthly Mindedness. the Heart is naturally and consequentially hardned (by the repeated Resistance

tance of its Power) as Clay is in the Sun, or as Stubble is burned by the Fire, without the least Shadow of Partiality or Variableness in God, (any more than in the Sun and Fire) No; in him is no Variableness nor Shadow of Turning.

I would take this Opportunity farther to vindicate, (as far as my poor Capacity is able) the Attributes of God's Goodness and Justice, in his fore-knowing and ordaining the Preference he would give to the *House of Jacob*, before that of *Eſau*, whilst they were struggling in the Womb, and had neither done Good nor Evil; and to shew there is not nor can be, as the Apostle *Paul* says, *Rom. IX.* any Unrighteousness with God. That it related to Nations, not Persons, we have God's own Word for it, *Gen. XXV.* And if what had been fore-ordain'd to be done for the Family of *Jacob*, had been any Prejudice to the *Gentiles*, which Word signifies the rest of the Nations, God's Justice would have been impeached, which God forbid should be so much as thought, much less written by any of the Sons of Men.

That it was not so, I offer the following Reasons as they appear to my Understanding, but would impose them upon none.

'Tis true, God did fore-ordain that Christ should come and be born of the Family of

E

Jacob

Jacob, and for that Reason, not for their own Sakes, he would make of that Family, tho' one of the least, a Nation high in Name, in Praise and in Honour above all other Nations he had made, *Deut. XXVI. 18. 19.* But then this was to be, I say, without Prejudice to the rest of the Nations, for they would still remain under the Promise made to *Abraham*, above 400 Years before this Covenant was made with the Children of *Jacob* at Mount *Sinai*: That it was, I say, no Bar nor Prejudice to the rest of the Nations, is most evident, for in the fulness of Time they received the Benefit of the *Messiah* as well as the *Jews*. But as *Christ* was born among them, it gave them the Priority, or first Offer of Him. Tho' the *Jews* were so self-conceited, that they thought, by their being under the Covenant at Mount *Sinai*, *Christ* was appropriated to them only, the contrary whereof, the Apostle *Paul* labours much with the *Jews*, (who were his own Nation,) to convince them of. So that all Mankind remained upon one Bottom, with Respect to their Eternal State, for 'tis plain, the *Election* related not to Persons, but to the Nation composed of that Family, and I think it may be said with great Certainty, to their State in this World only, as is very evident in the holy Writings, particularly *Deut. XXVIII.*

That

That all Men were upon one Bottom with Respect to Christ, (except the Priority before mentioned) is very plain, I say, by his Dying for all Men, *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*; and from his being the Judge of all Men, which is to be according to their Deeds, not according to their State, Name or Pretensions in this World; that would be not righteous, but unequal Judgment; but the People of all Nations, according to the Account we have of that great *Affize*, shall receive a Judgment according as their Deeds have been. So in Condemnation the *Jews* have also, of Course, the Priority; to the *Jew* first, and also to the *Gentile*. Rom. II. 9. And even in the Books of the Law it self (much more by Gospel Writers) God's Justice and universal Regard to his whole Creation is sufficiently avouched, and that he neither regarded Persons nor took Rewards, but executed the Judgment of the Fatherless and Widow, and the Soul that did any Thing presumptuously, whether born in the Land or a Stranger, the same broke the Command of God, and his Iniquity was upon his own Head; nay the Stranger might by being circumcised &c. come under the very Constitution of the *Jews* in this World; we see, even in this Respect, he was cared for as well as the other; so that there is no Shadow of Partiality in God: No; He is just in all his Doings, and equal in all his Ways, tho' they are past our finding out.

Therefore God's making one Nation of more Honour than the rest, as to their Use and Name in this World, is very fitly compared to a Potters making his Vessels so; and the Nations no more than the Clay ought to say, What doest thou? This Simile being well understood, tends very much to illustrate this Affair.

We find the Potter, out of the same Lump of Clay, makes, to serve his Purpose, Vessels of more or less Honour in their several Uses or Stations, without the least Imputation of Partiality, and with a great deal of Reason; for their different Shapes and different Uses do neither debase nor enoble the Clay; they all retaining the same common Nature of the Clay: And which, I say, is neither the better nor worse in that Respect, for the Name or Station the Potter has given it,

In like Manner it may be said, God, to serve his Purpose, made out of the Lump of Mankind, one Nation or Family of more Honour than the rest, but this did not remove them from the common Mortal Nature, with the rest of the Sons of *Adam*, nor did it enable them any more than the others, to work the Righteousness of Faith; and therefore with Respect to an Eternal State, they were never the better nor worse for any Name or Station they were placed in; for in that Re-
spect

spee^t 'tis very evident, all Nations remained under the Promise made to *Abraham*. Nor did the Covenant that God made with the little Family of *Jacob* at *Mount Horeb*, remove them out of the Promise made to all Nations, and in which they stood in common with them, (the Priority excepted) in Respect to Christ; every one I say, being answerable for their own Doings at his Judgment Seat.

These Considerations may help to set Men's Minds free from those unworthy and unwarrantable Notions, which some pretend to draw from the Scriptures, as if there were Partiality or Respect of Persons with God, whereas the Apostle *Peter* is positive, Acts X. 34, 35. *God is no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation, he that feareth him and worketh Righteousness is accepted of him.*

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